



# KATEHON

## ROOTS OF AMERICAN CHRISTIAN ZIONISM. PART I



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Long before John Locke set about writing his late 17<sup>th</sup> century works which laid the foundations for political liberalism in the Anglo-Saxon world (and the broader West), there existed the already deeply entrenched religious views of Martin Luther and John Calvin. The works of these two founding fathers of Protestantism greatly influenced the spiritual, cultural, political, social and economic worldview of Americans far more than anything written by Locke or the other social contract philosophers of the Enlightenment (e.g., Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, et al.). This unique American worldview, or more specifically *culture-soul*, which arose on the rocky

shores of New England during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, can indeed be classified as “Calvinist” as it exhibits many distinctly **Calvinist** traits such as the Protestant Ethic, staunch individualism, an obsession with the concept of God’s Chosen People, the belief in exceptionalism, a universal world mission, etcetera. However, there is a specific **ideological catalyst** within Calvinism which itself provided the foundation for the tradition of Christian Zionism to take root – a tradition which for the past 400 years has flourished in North America and indeed is flourishing today like never before among evangelical Christians, Neoconservatives and a variety of other groups. The ideological catalyst alluded to is **Judeocentric prophecy interpretation**. Without this fundamental ideological catalyst firmly in place (implanted as it was in early Protestant theology), it is highly doubtful whether the subsequent doctrine of Christian Zionism would have ever arisen – a doctrine which has had an enormous influence not only on American religion and politics but on American culture and identity as well.

Without question, the strongest advocates of Christian Zionism in the United States today are evangelical Christians. Here it is important to understand that the evangelicals are not only a religious group, but they are a highly mobilized political bloc who enjoy an enormous amount of support nationwide (especially in the South and Midwest), and thus they wield a great amount of political power. The defining characteristic or trait of evangelical Christians is not their belief in Jesus but rather their *unconditional support* for the modern terroristic state of Israel. Indeed, it is their unabashed Zionist fanaticism that has caused many to refer to evangelicals as “Christian Zionists” – and indeed, in the author’s opinion, these two terms (“evangelical” and “Christian Zionist”) are synonymous.

*Understanding the two intertwined facts that (1) Christian Zionists possess a great deal of power in the U.S. and (2) they are absolutely fanatical when it comes to supporting Israel also helps one to understand why a pro-Jewish lobbying organization like AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee) has so much political influence in the United States.*

Inevitably then, the following questions arise: **Why are there all of these Zionist Christians? Where did they come from? Why is Christian Zionism so prevalent in America, etc.?** To answer these questions we must study both the *historical* and *ideological* bases of Judeocentric prophecy interpretation, as well as the Judeocentric tradition of biblical hermeneutics in general. We must therefore begin our study in the most obvious place, the Protestant Reformation, and attempt to understand the worldview of its foremost figure, Martin Luther.

The important thing to know about Luther with regard to Judeocentric prophecy interpretation is his absolute emphasis on *biblical literalism* – i.e. his insistence on the idea that when one reads and interprets the bible, it must be taken literally. Luther inaugurated this patently Protestant view which, it should be said, fundamentally differs from medieval hermeneutics. For example, medieval theologians tried to embrace as many approaches as possible when interpreting biblical texts – they were quite literally *Catholic* (i.e. universal) in this sense. They would interpret the bible metaphorically, allegorically, anagogically – as many ways as possible in order to extract every last drop of biblical “juice” or meaning from the text. But Luther went in a very different direction. He insisted solely on blunt literalism. In other words, he insisted on interpreting all of history through a narrow biblical lens by looking to secular historical events for confirmations and clues to past and future biblical prophecies.

As the unequivocal founder (or “first father”) of Protestantism, Luther had obviously made prime enemies with the Pope and the entire Catholic Church as a religious and political institution. Accordingly, Luther directed his most passionate attacks against Catholicism. Nevertheless, there was another very powerful religio-political force which Luther frequently denounced – the Ottoman Empire. And so, in his interpretation of biblical prophecy Luther considered the Antichrist as being a two-headed demonic entity, which is to say a “Turco-Catholic” Antichrist. Both Muslims and Catholics were considered to be two sides of the same satanic coin, as it were.

Regarding the Jews, it is well known that Luther became famously anti-Jewish later in life, going so far as to publish a work in 1543 entitled *On the Jews and Their Lies*. Nevertheless, Luther was the first theologian to advance the notion of *Jewish national conversion* – a belief that still persists among some Christian Zionists. Those who subscribe to the doctrine of Jewish national conversion essentially believe that preceding Christ’s return, there will be a mass conversion of Jews to Christianity, and that this conversion will actually hasten the Second Coming of Christ. It must be stressed that John Calvin also believed in the idea of Jewish national conversion, in addition to all of the other biblical-literalist ideas advanced by Luther.

Many of the English followers of Luther and Calvin were absolutely captivated by the prospect of a Jewish national conversion – and it is precisely in England where Christian Zionism first rears its head as a popular religious force. It was on account of the pro-Jewish advocacy and intellectual influence of a number of English Christian Zionists that Oliver Cromwell was persuaded to reverse the centuries-old prohibition

on Jews entering England, which had been enacted in 1290 by King Edward I. Thus, in 1657 Jews were once again permitted (and even encouraged) to settle in England.

The English Puritans were, needless to say, very elated to see the Jews return. They interpreted this historical event in the same way Luther or Calvin would – as a clear sign from God which would mark the imminent return of Christ. And so, they immediately began trying to convert as many Jews to Protestantism as possible, only to find (to their great chagrin) that they were in fact converting no one. The Puritans soon discovered that the conversion of a single Jew was something which was extremely rare. Moreover, they soon realized that the Jews only wanted to be left alone – they wanted to remain in their own communities, maintain their own culture and traditions, to conduct business and go about their lives. In other words, the Jews wanted to remain Jews. This fact greatly disappointed the English Puritans because, quite clearly, their apocalyptic hopes were riding on a different outcome (as it were) and were thus not being fulfilled in a literal way. And so, their hermeneutical interpretation changed from having a strong emphasis on literalism to favoring a more allegorical interpretation along the lines of ***preterism***. (Preterist theology maintains that the prophecies described in the bible are not really prophecies but sets of allegories for events which have already occurred.)

Thus, preterist interpretations started to arise among the Puritans of England, and philology began to be used in hermeneutics by leading European philosophers like Hobbes, Grotius, Spinoza and others. It is important to stress, at this point, that on account of the relative isolation of the American colonies from the events taking place in England, the turning away from literalism in hermeneutics did not take hold in America. If anything, the intertwined ideas of biblical literalism and pro-Jewish sentiment would only grow stronger becoming a staple of American religion, thereby distinguishing it greatly from its British counterpart.

In his famous 1630 “City upon a Hill” speech, John Winthrop (the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony) compared his fellow Puritan settlers to the Jews of the Old Testament. Winthrop stated that, like the Jews, the Puritans were expelled from their homes in England; like the Jews, they were persecuted; and like the Jews, they had a special covenant with God, which is to say that the Puritans believed they were given a special mission by God and that they had a special or “exceptional” role to play in history. This 1630 speech by Winthrop – which was actually just one part of his sermon, entitled “A Model of Christian Charity” – constituted the beginning of what would emerge to create not only Christian Zionism but a general kind of ethos in America, and a general idea of American exceptionalism.

The next major American figure to mention after Gov. John Winthrop is the Reverend John Cotton (1585-1652). Beginning in 1639 Cotton delivered a number of millenarian and Judeocentric speeches which also tied in the idea that the people of the New England colonies were a special people who possessed a special divinely ordained mission from God – that they were “Chosen,” just as the Old Testament Israelites had been “Chosen.” This line of thought was developed further in the work of one of Cotton’s close friends and associates (who happened also to possess a rather strange first name): the Reverend Increase Mather (1639-1723).

In 1669 Mather published a book entitled *The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation*. In this work, Mather insisted on a literalist interpretation of biblical prophecy and of the entire bible in general. A man of considerable erudition, Increase Mather was definitely aware of the anti-literalist (preterist) trends which were gaining ground in England (trends with which he strongly disagreed), and so he committed himself to defending biblical literalism against all other tendencies. Mather strongly believed that if one does not interpret the bible literally – if people allow themselves to get caught up in metaphor and allegory – then eventually the concept of religious faith will lose its entire meaning. Mather also repeated in his work many of the same themes of his Christian Zionist predecessors, going all the way back to Calvin and Luther. Themes such as: Jewish national conversion paving the way for the return of Christ, the destruction of the Catholic Church, the return of the Jews to Palestine and the concomitant destruction of Islam which would accompany the return, etc.

Meanwhile, back in England, there was not only a growing sense of anti-literalism taking root, but there was also a growing indifference to the overall destiny (spiritual or otherwise) of the New England colonists themselves. For example, in 1634 the well-read English bible scholar Joseph Mead (1586-1639), when asked for his opinion of the New England colonists, essentially said that he wished the colonists well but he did not think that the colonies – or more specifically, North America – had any importance in an eschatological sense. Mead even went as far as to say that he believed America was the land to which Satan and his armies had fled at some point in the remote past, because Christ’s message (which had been spread throughout the rest of the known world) had not been received by the indigenous peoples prior to the arrival of the Europeans.

Here, one should understand that at this time in history, when Mead made his judgment on North America, there already existed widespread speculation among Christian settlers as to the biblical origins of American Indians – because at this time, it was still believed by most Christians that the origin of every race, tribe and people on earth could be found in the pages of the Book of Genesis. The “discovery” of

indigenous non-White peoples in the New World presented the Christian theologians with a great conundrum. It was not enough to simply state that the indigenous peoples had always lived in North America; a formal explanation would be required. So, many began to assume that the Indians might have been the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. However, speculation about this eventually died out after countless attempts to convert the Indians had completely failed. In time, Joseph Mead's negative view of North America and its indigenous population eventually found a significant base of support in England. Some people began to believe that the New World was in fact Satan's den and that the Indians were nothing more than reincarnated "Canaanite" heathens, i.e. savage, idol-worshipping pawns of Satan.

It was only after Joseph Mead had been dead for more than half a century that a few New England colonists began responding (in the 1690s) to what he had said about America all those decades before. One of the New England respondents was Judge Samuel Sewall (1652-1730). Essentially Sewall stated in his "response" that he not only disagreed with the late Joseph Mead's view that America would have no place in the Millennium (i.e., millennial reign of Christ), but Sewall went so far as to say that **America would host the actual physical location of the future New Jerusalem**. Accompanying this assertion was an unmistakable expression of colonial patriotism (or separatism), as Sewall was unquestionably offended by Mead's statements. Another New England respondent was the famous colonial preacher and polymath Cotton Mather (1663-1728) – the son of Increase Mather and grandson of John Cotton. In his response to Mead, Cotton Mather did not exhibit as much colonial pride as Sewall. For example, he did not dare espouse the unorthodox view that the future seat of Christ's Kingdom on earth would be located in America. Nevertheless, Mather did state that it was unreasonable to believe that, upon Christ's return, America would have no role to play in the coming Millennium.

*Overall, in these responses one could clearly detect an emerging, nascent American nationalism mixing with the older Puritan tradition of Judeocentric prophecy interpretation. Indeed, both American patriotism and Judeocentrism coalesced to create an unmistakable civic religion in what would become the United States.*

The person of Cotton Mather should be discussed here a bit further because, in all honesty, he was quite an interesting historical figure and one who is perhaps underestimated in his contribution to helping form American identity. As a prolific author and confirmed polymath, Cotton Mather was interested and knowledgeable in a wide variety of subjects, and one of these subjects was Islam. He was very interested in Islamic culture, history and in the Ottoman Empire, in particular. It

should be said that at this time in colonial history it was very popular to read the narratives of those who had been abducted and taken captive by the various American Indian tribes. Thus in a similar fashion (due to his great knowledge of Muslim cultures), Mather produced a number of popular stories on the experiences of Anglo-American sailors who had been taken captive by the infamous Barbary pirates of North Africa.

Consequently, Cotton Mather's writing contributed quite significantly to the formation of early American nationalism. For example, he would write about the various trials and degradations suffered by the American captives, and of the great need for them to persevere and hold on to their Christian faith. So, these stories served to confirm and consolidate American national identity, and to foster an already growing sense of patriotism in the colonies.

As Cotton Mather grew older he became more acquainted with the non-literalist trends and hermeneutics back in England. And he saw that many people had been routinely disappointed with the literalist interpretations of various ministers – which is to say, many had become disappointed with those ministers who, based on their own literal interpretations of biblical text, had predicted that the Millennium would arrive on such and such a date. For example, some pastors predicted the Millennium would come in 1697, others said it would come in 1716, etcetera.

At that point, after seeing the “great disappointments” of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries among the religious masses, Cotton Mather began to question whether a purely literal approach to interpreting biblical prophecy was correct. Thus, Mather tried to establish something of a hybrid approach. Toward the end of his life, however, he became a convinced pre-millennialist like Joseph Mead, which is to say that Mather no longer believed that the Jews had to be converted as a precondition prior to Christ's return, and that the only thing preventing the events of the Apocalypse from being set in motion is the Will of God. In other words, Christ could return at any moment and there are no essential preconditions for the Second Coming.

In any event, by the mid-eighteenth century, after more than a century of Judeocentric indoctrination and pulpit-based propaganda, the English colonists of North America (and especially those in New England) began to see themselves as spiritual Jews, which is to say they began to identify themselves as a Second Israel religiously, historically, and (in some ways) even culturally. This belief emerges especially strong in the years leading up to the American War of Independence – to form what the historian Nathan Hatch refers to as **civil millenarianism**. What Hatch

means by the term “civil millenarianism” is that the idea of civic or patriotic duty and political involvement eventually coalesced with millenarian prophecy to create a civic belief system in which one’s political and national identity combines with one’s religious beliefs. And indeed, this was a phenomenon which was occurring to an enormous extent throughout New England and, by extension, throughout all of the other colonies as well – because, compared to all of the other colonies, New England dominated in terms of intellectual influence. So it is important for the reader to comprehend that practically all of these early American ideas and works have their origins in the long-deceased minds of New England’s foremost religious zealots.

And so, as we pass into the second half of the eighteenth century, when the British government intensified its perceived “tyranny” against the considerably free and prosperous colonials (via the Stamp Act, the Tea Act, etc.), the long-established tradition of Judeocentric prophecy interpretation (as well as the age-old belief in the “Turco-Catholic” Antichrist) was easily combined with American civil millenarianism in such a way as to portray the British government – and the embodiment of that government, King George III – as being the Antichrist or Satan incarnate. Naturally then, the eventual war against Britain came to be seen by many of those descended from Puritan stock as a grand cosmic, apocalyptic struggle between the forces of Good and Evil.

Of course, many traditional American historians like to emphasize the mainstream view that the founders of the United States were great admirers and followers of the ideas of John Locke, and that they all categorically believed in libertarian type principles which include religious tolerance among other “enlightened” views such as freedom of speech, civil rights, limited government, property rights, etc. However, this mainstream view is not at all accurate. The truth of the matter is that the influence of millenarian Puritanism (aka Judeocentrism, aka Christian Zionism) on the ideological foundations of the United States is grossly understated and underrepresented in the historiography of the American experience. This is a tradition which fundamentally **denies** religious tolerance, **denies** minority rights and **denies** freedom of expression. And this *is* the archetypical tradition upon which the United States was fundamentally founded.

Indeed, it was civil millenarianism, specifically, which was the driving ideological engine behind the so-called American “Revolution” (i.e., War of Independence). Then, upon independence, the civil millenarian idea became embedded in the American national identity and consciousness. In other words, it became a part of what it means to be “American.” Thus, more and more Americans, post-independence, came to view themselves as the New Israel, the New Chosen



People, the holders of another covenant with God, the Redeemer Nation, the last bastion of freedom on earth, and so on. The snowball began rolling downhill, so to speak. Hence it takes no great effort for one to see how this kind of civil millenarian belief system led to the modern civic religion of American Exceptionalism and the patently false and hypocritical view that America stands for “freedom and democracy” around the world.

## ROOTS OF AMERICAN CHRISTIAN ZIONISM, PART 2

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**Christophe Borsella**

During the nineteenth century there came into being two quintessentially American religious movements: Mormonism and Seventh Day Adventism (aka Millerism). One of the things that really stands out about Mormonism, especially within the context of Judeocentric prophecy interpretation, is that the first Mormons (Joseph Smith, Orson Hyde, et al.) strongly believed that there were two “Chosen People”: the Jews and the Americans (or the “Second Israelites”). Likewise, according to Mormonism’s founder and life-long freemason Joseph Smith (1805-1844), there are two Jerusalems: the original biblical Jerusalem located in Palestine, and a New Jerusalem which would someday be established in North America. According to Smith, each city would house one of God’s two Chosen Peoples; the Jews would receive the old Jerusalem and the Americans would inherit the new. The Jews would be granted the earthly kingdom of God in Palestine, and the Christians (i.e., Protestants, and more specifically *Mormons*) would inherit the spiritual kingdom. Thus, it was with the Mormons and their distinct brand of Protestant theology that there really began to evolve a well-articulated theological division between Jews and *Americans*, in contradistinction to the prior millennialist division between Jews and Christians.

As mentioned above, the other quintessentially American religious movement is Seventh Day Adventism founded by William Miller (1782-1849). Miller was someone who was incredibly interested in Judeocentric prophecy interpretation, and he

actually borrowed the work of a number of English writers – and even the calendar system of the Karaite Jews – in order to advance his religious views and, specifically, to determine the precise date of the Second Coming which would then usher in the millennial reign of Christ on earth. He especially incorporated many of the writings of the renowned “Father of Classical Physics” Sir Isaac Newton, who himself expended a prodigious amount of intellectual energy on examining and interpreting biblical prophecies so as to determine the exact date of the “end of the world.”

According to Miller, the return of Christ would occur sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844 – sometime in that one-year period between the spring equinoxes. When the cut-off date came and went, as it inevitably did, Miller gave the excuse that he had made a mistake in his “calculations.” And so, he recalculated and came up with a new date: October 22, 1844. Of course, that date came and went and nothing happened. But it was really quite sad for his loyal followers, because, in preparation for the “big event,” they had sold all their land, property and earthly possessions to the point where they had literally become penniless. This naturally caused Miller’s followers to go into a deep depression, which came to be known historically as the Great Disappointment.

*In any event, it is important to note that the way in which William Miller differs from nearly all other Protestant religious leaders is that he was not Judeocentric at all. Instead, he was a “supersessionist,” meaning he believed that the covenant which the Jews had once held with God was now held by Christians, i.e. the true Christian Church. Therefore, according to supersessionist belief, God no longer owed the Jews anything. As Miller himself once stated, “the Jew has had his day.” So again, Miller was not at all Judeocentric. And because he held a more negative opinion about Jews, Miller was harshly criticized and even condemned by many of America’s leading Protestant figures.*

Now we come to the person who is regarded as the father of Evangelicalism: John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Originally, Darby was an Anglican priest in Ireland who was staunchly against the Catholic Church and very interested in eschatology and prophecy interpretation. Eventually Darby came to repudiate the Anglican Church of Ireland and all churches everywhere. Darby then began advising his followers to cut themselves off from the world (or “worldly affairs”) – to neither participate in politics nor church life, and to fully prepare themselves for the return of Christ. Like the Mormons, Darby drew a sharp distinction between true Christians (i.e., Protestants), whom he collectively considered to be the “spiritual bride of Christ,” and Jews who comprised the “earthly bride.” Darby promoted the idea that Jews would receive an earthly inheritance (Israel) and Christians would be raptured up into heaven to be

with Christ. All those who remained on earth would have to suffer greatly under the Antichrist due to all of the chaos and destruction generated through him.

The most famous idea in all of Darby's work is the idea of the so-called "rapture" – a theological concept which is certainly very popular today among evangelicals in the United States. However, unlike many of his contemporaries and predecessors, Darby did not believe that the Jews would have to be converted to Protestantism in order to usher in the apocalypse. In other words, Darby was a convinced premillennialist; he believed that when the appointed time came, Christ would simply return. Then, upon his return, Christ would rapture up the elect (the spiritual bride) and they would disappear from the face of the earth. The Jews (the earthly bride) would then return to Palestine to exterminate all the Muslims and thus inherit the Holy Land. Then the Antichrist would emerge to usher in the Tribulation – a time of great terror and destruction, where all of the people remaining on earth would be greatly punished. According to Darby, this punishment would be meted out by God to non-Christians in general, but more specifically to Jews for their responsibility, as he saw it, for the crucifixion of Christ.

Thus, Darby is often described as an *anti-supersessionist* (unlike the Seventh Day Adventists) because he, in some sense, did believe that the Jews are still the people of God. Even so, this is only a kind of ornamental anti-supersessionism, as Darby still believed that Jews would have to suffer during the Tribulation (like everyone else who remained on earth) and that only true Christians would escape the sheer horror of the apocalypse. It should further be known that Darby was actually quite harsh in his remarks on Jews and, indeed, he taught his followers to have this same contemptible attitude toward them (in striking contrast to modern-day Christian Zionists). In Darby's view the Jewish people were nothing more than elements in the fulfillment of biblical prophecy; Jews were not people in themselves but only chess pieces in the fulfillment of a grand cosmic drama.

As already mentioned, John Nelson Darby was strongly anti-political. He quite openly stated (referring to himself and his followers), "We do not mix in politics; we are not of the world: we do not vote." This is yet another way in which Darby's evangelicals differ from their modern politically mobilized counterparts in America. During his life, Darby had quite a lot of influence on various American preachers, especially one by the name of Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899). It was essentially Moody that began spreading Darby's doctrine throughout the United States – a unique strain of biblical interpretation called "dispensationalism," because both Darby and Moody believed that the Word of God comes forth and is revealed to humanity in special installments or "dispensations."

And although John Nelson Darby's anti-political message did resonate to an extent among some nineteenth century American evangelicals, ultimately it was a message that failed. This is because Americans have a long tradition of civil millenarianism (of mixing their religion in politics), which is fundamentally rooted in the New England Puritan idea that Americans are the New Chosen People and America is the New Israel. So, as one can discern from a number of his comments on America, Darby was quite dismayed at what he observed among those Americans who claimed to follow his ideas. It is important to point this out because, again, modern Christian Zionism is *extremely* political or "worldly." Darbyite theology, on the other hand, advocated for a complete withdrawal from the world, not only from politics but from organized churches as well – and of course this latter position of Darby's earned him a great deal of contempt and criticism from many of his contemporaries.

Perhaps the most important historical figure who laid the groundwork for modern Christian Zionism, which is to say the person who was most instrumental in adding a powerful political dimension to Christian Zionism, was William E. Blackstone (1841-1935). Blackstone was a businessman who found success early in life. Sometime after making his fortune, Blackstone decided to remove himself from the business world and dedicated himself to religious matters, specifically to Judeocentric prophecy interpretation. Here, he believed (unlike Darby) in active political involvement with the explicit mission of assisting Jews (yes *Jews*, **not Christians**) as much as possible. Blackstone published his first book on this subject in 1878 entitled *Jesus Is Coming*. In it he highlighted various "signs" which, he thought, conclusively demonstrated that the end of the age was near. It is important to note that, at this time in world history, the publishing of Blackstone's work roughly coincided with the emergence of political Zionism among Jews in Europe.

As far as prophetic "signs" go, William Blackstone viewed Zionism as a sign which was very encouraging, and he did everything he possibly could to assist the likes of Theodor Herzl and other influential members of the World Zionist Congress. And indeed, Blackstone was a major friend to the Zionists. So much so that from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth, Blackstone would write to one U.S. president after another, petitioning them to bring as many eastern European Jews into the country as possible and to assist in helping Zionist leaders create a Jewish state in Palestine. This was largely due to the news stories Blackstone read of the various anti-Jewish pogroms which were allegedly occurring in Russia at the time.

And so, Blackstone wrote first to President Harrison on this issue, advocating for millions of eastern European Jews to come to America. Needless to say, his appeals were not successful immediately. But Blackstone was a dogged political activist. He

would continue writing to other presidents and politicians on the Jewish issue and was especially successful in getting through to Woodrow Wilson. His letters to President Wilson were quite interesting because he would repeatedly drive home the point that if Wilson would assist the Jews and the Zionist effort to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, then Wilson would himself go down in history as one of the greatest world leaders of all time, along the lines of Cyrus the Great. It is very well known to historians that over the course of his political career Wilson had developed a deep-seated messiah complex, so Blackstone's "tact" in dealing with Wilson (i.e., in comparing him to one of history's great kings) was very shrewd indeed, and it yielded great results.

It should be mentioned that there is quite a bit of irony in William Blackstone's career as a political activist, because despite the fact that he was someone who wanted to evict millions of Arabs from their ancestral lands in the Middle East, and despite the fact that he is considered a founding father of extreme right-wing Christian Zionism, Blackstone really *was* a progressive/left-wing "social gospel" Christian. For example, one of the institutions he was responsible for helping to establish was the International Court of Justice. And without question this is one of many "humanitarian" world bodies which today's Christian Zionists regularly deride due to the fact that the ICJ happens also to condemn Israel on a regular basis. It is certainly ironic that this man (Blackstone), whom Christian Zionists can trace their philosophical lineage to, was a strong supporter of the International Court of Justice.

When, during the early years of the twentieth century, the United States was witnessing the political formation of the burgeoning Jewish state via the Balfour Declaration of 1917, there again sprouted a distinct millenarian ethos. Evangelical leaders became more and more vocal in their support for the Jewish people to conquer Palestine and to dispossess and even *exterminate* all Muslims because, they maintained, the Jews are God's "Chosen People." Comparisons were easily made (as more and more Jewish "settlers" immigrated to Palestine) between what the Jews were doing to the Arabs and what the American settlers had already done to North America's indigenous population. Indeed, there was a conscious effort – among religious, cultural, and political elites – to associate the ongoing Jewish conquest of Palestine with the idea of American Manifest Destiny. The utter extermination of Palestinians was viewed in a positive light, not only by Christian Zionist leaders but by major American media outlets as well. Americans and Jews were portrayed as having come together, as God's People, in order to carry out their God-given mission to expand "Judeo-Christian" civilization as far afield as possible.

*One must also understand that as Zionism was gaining influence politically, during the late nineteenth century, the imperialist mentality was also emerging in America. The cataclysmic War Between the States (1861-1865), in which nearly 1 million Americans lost their lives, was still a recent memory for most, and the vast majority wanted to somehow forget all the many pains which were caused by that especially cruel internecine war. Both Northerners and Southerners desperately craved some semblance of patriotic unity. The Spanish-American War would provide such a display of patriotism and national unity.*

The 20-year period between the Spanish-American War (1898) and the end of World War I (1918) witnessed a profound resurgence of American patriotism which galvanized the nation like never before. It just so happens that these two pivotal decades also witnessed the influx of millions of Jewish immigrants (the largest influx of Jews in American history). In addition, the Federal Reserve System was also established during this era (via the passage of the Federal Reserve Act in 1913), and for the first time in history Jewish political and economic power really began to consolidate itself in North America. So, all of these factors began to coalesce.

It is by no means accidental that the Puritanical belief that Americans are God's Chosen People was then projected on to the Zionists. Indeed, more and more Americans came to consider the Jews as a special kindred people – as being like themselves. It is therefore easy to see how it is an integral part of American culture to be pro-Jewish. This has been true, historically, since the earliest days of colonial settlement, long before the official establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Today, it is even highly doubtful whether a genuine American identity could exist without there being a firm pro-Jewish ethos in place, despite what the ever-dwindling numbers of paleoconservatives have to say. It all goes back to the civil millenarian tradition which arose out of a Puritanical religious source in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and then mixed with a late 19<sup>th</sup> century imperialist worldview.

*Hence the fanatical support for Israel among evangelicals (aka Christian Zionists) in the United States. The evangelical belief in the rapture and Judeocentric prophecy interpretation, in addition to the central role which the Jews and the state of Israel play in the evangelicals' overall belief system – all these fundamental pillars of the Christian Zionist worldview translate to mean that evangelicals (and Christian Zionists in general) **have to support Israel and the Jewish lobby** in America. It is quite literally a part of their religion – and I dare say the number one tenet of their entire Weltanschauung – to be pro-Israel. Their support for Israel is so important, in fact, that if Israel ever ceased to exist, their religion would be proven wrong. Thus, the*

*evangelicals/Christian Zionists must do whatever they can to support Israel in any way possible.*

In addition to the Christian Zionists, there is one other group of people that one can definitely say is an inheritor of the pro-Jewish/pro-Israel tradition – and that group is the **neoconservative** faction in American politics. If neocons are not modern-day millenarians, then I (the author) don't know who is! Just take a look at Francis Fukuyama's book, *The End of History* (1992). In this (his most famous) work, Fukuyama states that, with the fall of the Soviet Union, liberal democracy has essentially triumphed over all other political systems worldwide. And like many other neocons, Fukuyama believes that America has the right and the moral duty to go forth and spread its special brand of "freedom and democracy" throughout the world. So again, one sees this Puritanical idea of America being a Second Israel favored by God – the same great "bastion of freedom" that the Puritans believed in from the time of their initial landing at Plymouth Rock all the way to the Revolutionary era. And of course, this ties into the millenarian aspect as well – the idea of the democratic millennium; that democracy has conquered the world and all other forms of politics and governance are gone forever. This "all-or-nothing" worldview, that some analysts have rightly termed "liberal fundamentalism," dominates the mentality of neoconservative think tanks, such as the Project for the New American Century – probably the most influential group calling for the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and subsequent execution of Saddam Hussein.

What is ironic about neoconservative historians is that they tend to downplay the effect of religion on the founding of the United States and on American culture in general. They claim that the founders were all secularists and that the religious nationalism of the Puritans was not an influential force in the country's founding. This premise is of course totally wrong. Nevertheless, the neocons definitely comprise a group that has inherited the millenarian tradition, and this fact explains quite well why neocons tend to agree on so many points with Christian evangelicals, especially with regard to their shared support for the state of Israel and the American Jewish lobby.

Indeed, the American Jewish lobby itself is very powerful and influential both in the United States and abroad. However, were it not for the long Protestant American tradition of forming American identity around Judeocentric and millenarian lines, it is highly dubious to suggest that the pro-Israel lobby would have any power in the United States whatsoever. As already mentioned, **it is simply a part of American culture to be pro-Jewish**. This fact is what ultimately empowers the Israel lobby and it is the ultimate source of American support for the state of Israel, despite the fact

that Israel offers no strategic benefit to the U.S. government, and despite the fact that Israel does not share any alleged “democratic values” with the United States or the broader West.

In his book *Knowing Too Much* (2012), American Jewish scholar Norman Finkelstein predicts that American support for Israel will eventually end as the knowledge of Israel’s atrocities spreads throughout the news media and as American Jews learn more and more about the true nature of Israeli aggression (given how cerebral and literate they tend to be). American Jews will then come to the conclusion that supporting Israel contradicts their own predominantly liberal beliefs. And so, over time, as this tension becomes stronger and stronger, American Jews will cease supporting Israel as fervently as they once had, and this will lead to the eventual end of American support for Israel in general. This is Finkelstein’s claim, and it is ultimately flawed. Because, make no mistake: **American support for Israel will not end.**

*Even if American Jews stop supporting Israel tomorrow, there are still many tens of millions of evangelicals supporting the Jewish state. There is still an entire cultural context of pro-Jewishness being a part of American identity and the belief (dating back to the time of the Puritans) that Americans are the New Israelites. This deep-seated pro-Jewish ethos (ingrained in the psyche of tens of millions of Americans) is something that would be much more difficult to uproot and eliminate than the pro-Israel views of the American Jewish minority (who are themselves split on the issue).*

If we consider the evangelicals, support for Israel is the central tenet of their religion – it is not Jesus or God or the Holy Spirit. Support for Israel is the most fundamental idea behind evangelical Christianity or what could also be called Christian Zionism. And evangelicals will continue their support for Israel no matter what heinous atrocities that that illegal terrorist state continues to perpetrate against the indigenous non-Jewish peoples of the region. Evangelicals and Christian Zionists in general simply do not care. They evaluate the righteousness or unrighteousness of someone by the degree to which that person supports Israel. That kind of fanatical support is not going to vanish any time soon.

So this problem is much more serious than Finkelstein realizes. Moreover, the entire concept of “Christian Zionism” is much more ingrained in the American psyche than either he or even someone like David Duke realizes. Make no mistake about it: the Zionist problem does not ultimately stem from American Jewish support for Israel. Rather, it is entirely rooted in the pro-Jewish culture, history, politics, identity,



and religious traditions of ***Gentile Americans*** – a religious, cultural, political and national bloc which constitutes the primary support for Israel's dastardly deeds, and without which the Zionist state of Israel would have never come into being.